

For: FSA, RMA, and FAS Offices

**Compliance With OPM Position Classification Policies**

Approved by: Acting Deputy Administrator, Management



**1 Overview**

**A**

**Background**

The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) has advised USDA Mission Area Personnel Officers that OPM is emphasizing oversight and compliance in the area of position classification.

**B**

**Purpose**

This notice:

- provides OHRM's and OPM's guidance regarding position classification
- advises managers, supervisors, and employees of FFAS's commitment to the integrity of the classification system.

**2 OPM's Oversight and Compliance Activity**

**A**

**Enforcing  
Principles of the  
Classification  
System**

OPM has advised OHRM that it is enforcing the traditional precepts and conventions of the Federal classification system. Some USDA agencies have made the erroneous assumption that the general discontent with the current classification system conferred license to reinterpret OPM's classification rules. However, because the classification system is still legally prescribed, no such license exists. OPM is reasserting the primacy of their classification policies over the desires of agency managers for greater flexibility.

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**Disposal Date**

December 31, 1999

**Distribution**

All FSA, RMA, and FAS Offices; State Offices  
relay to Service Centers and GS employees

## 2 OPM's Oversight and Compliance Activity (Continued)

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### B

#### Actions Directed

OPM has formally identified positions in USDA which are not supportable, and in some cases, has directed OHRM to initiate classification consistency studies which will likely lead to the downgrading of other similar positions.

**Note:** Once OPM has certified the classification of any position, that determination is final and binding. USDA does not have the authority to reconsider OPM's decisions.

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## 3 FFAS Action

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### A

#### Assessment of Existing Positions

FFAS managers and supervisors must renew their awareness of OPM's traditionally restrictive application of classification regulations. Position classification must be taken seriously.

It is critical that managers and supervisors ensure that employees are performing duties commensurate with their grade levels. The likelihood for adverse consequences is greater in situations where grade disparities exist between employees who perform similar duties.

FFAS managers and supervisors are advised to:

- review the classification of positions in their organizations
  - discuss concerns with their servicing classifiers.
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### B

#### Proposed FFAS Classification Actions

When proposing new positions, or restructuring existing positions, managers and supervisors shall work in partnership with their servicing classifiers to ensure positions are fully supportable.

Positions shall not be reclassified solely for the purpose of recruiting or retaining employees.

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### 3 FFAS Action (Continued)

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#### C

##### **Desk Audits and Appeals**

Procedures for requesting a desk audit or filing a classification appeal are in 2-PM. HRD and PD shall:

- continue to process desk audit requests and appeals
- ensure that positions are classified consistent with OPM standards.

Should a desk audit or appeal reveal that an existing position is not supportable, HRD and PD shall work with the supervisor to:

- make every effort to avoid downgrading the position
  - identify grade-supporting duties and assign them to the position
  - ensure similar positions are also supportable.
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